



King's Research Portal

Document Version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication record in King's Research Portal](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Murray, R. (2017). Cruel time in Artaud's film scenarios. *Image [&] Narrative*, 17(5), 6-16.
<http://www.imageandnarrative.be/index.php/imagenarrative/article/view/1366>

Citing this paper

Please note that where the full-text provided on King's Research Portal is the Author Accepted Manuscript or Post-Print version this may differ from the final Published version. If citing, it is advised that you check and use the publisher's definitive version for pagination, volume/issue, and date of publication details. And where the final published version is provided on the Research Portal, if citing you are again advised to check the publisher's website for any subsequent corrections.

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the Research Portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognize and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the Research Portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the Research Portal

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact librarypure@kcl.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Cruel time in Artaud's film scenarios

Ros Murray

Abstract

This essay considers the temporality of cruelty in Artaud's unfinished and unrealised film scenarios. It asks not so much *what* is cruelty, but *when* is cruelty, suggesting that incompleteness is an inherent characteristic of Artaud's approach. Cruelty evokes both past and future, becoming a form of anachronism in the sense that it brings together disparate timeframes. This disruption of chronological and teleological patterns makes Artaud's film scenarios relevant to discussions of media archaeology, highlighting the importance of another, perhaps impossible, but no less existent, form of cinema. Artaud calls this "the poetry of what could have been".

Résumé

Cet essai analyse la temporalité de la cruauté dans les scénarios d'Antonin Artaud. Le propos ici n'est pas de se demander *ce qu'est* la cruauté, mais plutôt *quand* la cruauté a lieu, dans la mesure où l'une des caractéristiques essentielles de l'approche d'Artaud est l'inachèvement. La cruauté porte sur le passé et le futur, et devient une forme d'anachronisme dans le sens où elle rapproche des temporalités distinctes. Ce rejet de la composition chronologique et téléologique est pertinent dans le cadre des débats théoriques sur l'archéologie des médias, car il souligne l'importance d'une autre forme de cinéma, apparemment impossible mais qui pourtant existe. C'est ce qu'Artaud nomme "la poésie de ce qui pourrait être".

Keywords

Cruelty, Artaud, anachronism, film archaeology, scenarios.

“The paradox of Artaud”, writes Jerzy Grotowski, “lies in the fact that it is impossible to carry out his proposals” (Grotowski 1968, 118). If cruelty lies in impossibility, Artaud’s writings are no doubt far crueller to his practitioners than to his imagined audience or critics. In fact the impossibility of cruelty, just as with Artaud’s own writing which announces from the very outset its failure to express the true workings of the mind, produces vast amounts of text, not least from the critical theorists of the 1960s and 1970s who continually return to the example of Artaud, whilst demonstrating the ways in which Artaud resist exemplarity. Roland Barthes writes “l’impossibilité de parler d’Artaud est à peu près unique” (“the impossibility of speaking about Artaud is more-or-less unique” Barthes 1994, 1187); Derrida writes that Artaud’s “adventure” expresses “la protestation *elle-même* contre l’exemplification *elle-même*” (“the protestation *itself* against exemplification *itself*” Derrida 1967, 261); Blanchot writes that for Artaud “penser, c’est toujours déjà ne pas pouvoir penser encore” (“thinking is always already not yet being able to think” Blanchot 1959, 56); and Susan Sontag writes about the importance of the failure the work, or the life-project conceived as work (Sontag 1983, 16). Cruelty implies effort, failure and disappointment as much as it promises spectacular violence (whether implicit or explicit), rupture and sensory overload. This promise and its inevitable postponement prompts us to ask not so much *what* is cruelty, but perhaps more urgently, *when* is cruelty?

I want to return to Artaud’s often-overlooked film scenarios, to think about how the time of cruelty functions. The first point to note about Artaud’s temporalities overall is that they fiercely resist all forms of chronology, disrupting teleological and genealogical readings. His writings resemble a series of incomplete fragments, sketches or blueprints for an “oeuvre” that can never materialise. The lack of distinction between Artaud’s life and his work becomes immediately apparent to anyone approaching his texts, presenting an on-going challenge to those engaged in projects to compile any form of complete works. Researching Artaud becomes an archaeological project, the researcher piecing together fragments and looking at objects as much as reading texts, which themselves often more closely approach Artaud’s aims through their materiality than through their representative means. Moreover, attempts to distinguish between early and late Artaud, or to assemble a chronology gleaned from these miscellaneous objects fail to address a key issue, namely, that all of this work comprises of a chipping away or hammering of the very notion of representation; a physical, material process that begins and always comes back to the only dependable medium: the body itself, in whatever form or shape this body takes.¹

Artaud’s time-frames are apocalyptic, invoking catastrophic, disastrous events that are imminent but never come to pass, following the logic of the apocalypse, which depends in equal measure on the not-yet and on the long-buried past (*Les Nouvelles Révélations de L’Être* [*The New Revelations of Being*] outlines his definitive guide to the apocalypse, predicted, according a complex set of calculations, for 7th November 1937; see volume VII of his *Oeuvres complètes*, 1976-1994). References to time in Artaud’s writing oscillate between these two poles; on the one hand referring to eternity or to a magical secret age that only he can access, and on the other to an immediate future where the assault on representation has not yet occurred. The time of cruelty, he seems to insist, must be now, but in a present that can never materialise. He also suggests that cruelty existed in ancient cultures; for example in Ancient Egypt, with his insistence on the figure of the Kah and the

¹ The corporeal and embodied aspects of theatre, as opposed to its textual origins, are where Artaud’s influence has had its most enduring effect in both theatre and film; see for example practitioners such as Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Werner Schroeter, The Living Theatre, Peter Weiss, Peter Brook, Heiner Müller and Romeo Castellucci.

ever-present influence of the *Book of the Dead*, Mexico (see his writings on the Tarahumara, volume IX of the *Oeuvres complètes*) and Rome (*Les Cenci*, *Heliogabalus*, volumes V and VII, 1976-1994). Whilst all present forms of representation are doomed to fail, in the future, his project announces, there will be cruelty instead of representation.

Why turn to the cinema when looking for forms of cruelty? Artaud's cinema writings came before his theatre of cruelty, and a chronological reading of his work would suggest that he abandoned cinema in favour of theatre; he never explicitly returned to cinema, although references to film cameras in the form of distorted sketches are scattered across the pages of his later notebooks.² His interest in employing diverse sound and lighting technologies in the theatre are reminiscent of the cinematic,³ particularly where he advocates an all-engulfing, multi-dimensional sensorial assault on his audience. Perhaps most significantly, cinema was the only time-based medium available to Artaud during the 1920s and 1930s that had the potential to capture and preserve a visual record of the body in movement. The films in which Artaud appears give us access to the only moving images of Artaud, providing just a brief glimpse of how the gesturing body that occupies so much of his writing materialises. Cinematic cruelty depends on whether these images appear as coherent representations of what a body should look like or whether they undermine the very corporeality on which they depend, merging the material, the machinic, the technological, the human and the monstrous into hybrid, fragmentary incarnations, ultimately shocking the viewer into thinking differently, perhaps even using a different part of our brain.

Unsurprisingly, Artaud wholeheartedly rejected the commercially successful cinema of the 1920s, which largely comprised historical and literary adaptations. Here cinema disappoints where it compartmentalises and normalises time, in its measurement and representation of time, the way that it seamlessly renders time visible and comprehensible through a focus on historical events, movement, progress and chronology, ultimately narrativising, rationalising and taming those mysterious, a-temporal and disruptive forces that for Artaud must always remain just beyond our control. This sense of a true form of representation that is always slightly out of reach, or stretches beyond the limits of our imagination into parallel worlds where anything might be possible, suggests something far more radical, often hinted at in Artaud's onscreen gestures, which are either so wild and unruly as to shake the foundations of the drama they depict, or, when more subdued, appear infused with a nervous, twitchy energy that works to portray a sense of quiet dissatisfaction or unease.

Only one of Artaud's scenarios, *La Coquille et le Clergyman* (*The Seashell and the Clergyman*), was made into a film. Much of the scholarship on this film revolves around whether or not this was a successful adaptation, focussing on Artaud and Dulac's correspondence as well as the film's reception in Surrealist circles. Artaud's dissatisfaction with Dulac's film might well simply be a result of his dissatisfaction with everything that brought his work into the public eye, whether that was through publication, exhibitions, conferences, theatre productions or film. His resistance to completion is unwavering, epitomising the one unifying element that underpins all of his work. Following a long line of Artaud scholars and critical theorists who draw on the potential of failure for offering alternative readings of Artaud's work, then, this article seeks to unravel the temporality of cruelty where it failed to materialise; in Artaud's unrealised film scenarios.

² For more on the cinematic qualities of Artaud's notebooks see (Barber 2008, 56).

³ See Christopher Innes (1993, 79) and Laura Marcus (2007, 246) on the cinematic aspects of Artaud's theatre.

Volume three of Artaud's complete works collates the surviving scenarios alongside Artaud's more theoretical writing about the cinema, letters and interviews. Of the ten scenarios listed by Artaud's posthumous editor Paule Thévenin, one is a fragment, four were written under a pseudonym, and one was lost altogether. The numerous footnotes explaining gaps and mistakes in the texts also draw the reader's attention to the fact that Artaud's authorship is under question; errors in typing suggest misheard dictation, some scenarios were deposited at the *société des auteurs* by others (often Yvonne Allendy) on Artaud's behalf, and Thévenin frequently mentions the difficulty of deciphering Artaud's erratic handwriting. *Le Bon sens* (*Good Sense*), written under the pseudonym Jean Mérim, is included as an annex because Thévenin doubts its authenticity, suggesting that Artaud did not write it at all (Ibid, 431). Of the scenarios Artaud did write himself, some were re-copied out by others who later lost the originals in a series of unfortunate but somehow fitting mishaps; the original hand-written scenario of *Deux Nations sur les confins de la Mongolie* (*Two Nations on the Borders of Mongolia* Artaud, 1978, 14), for example, was lost by an actor who died in a car accident after having borrowed the text from Artaud's friend Jean-Marie Conty.

These fortuitous elements work to highlight the difficulty of attributing the texts to Artaud as well as the impossibility of accurately dating most of the writings. Artaud's damaged or mistyped scenarios survive in as a shadowy form of ghostly presence, just as transcription and translation bear witness to the ghosts of their originals. The unrealised scenario itself is a film that must be imagined, the reader imagining a film imagined by Artaud. In some cases, as with *Les Dix-huit secondes* (*Eighteen Seconds*), whose protagonist is an anxiety-stricken poet "devenu incapable d'atteindre ses pensées" ("incapable of keeping up with his thoughts" Artaud 1978, 9), this becomes the imagining of a film of a state experienced by Artaud, taken to its logical conclusion when the protagonist shoots himself in the head. *Les Dix-huit secondes* thereby evokes the spirit of dead Artaud imagining (or foretelling) his own suicide, haunting the imagination of the reader. The scenarios themselves are full of ghostly figures such as vampires and other shadowy beings returning from the dead, refusing to stay safely buried in their coffins. In *Le Maître de Ballantrae* (*The Master of Ballantrae*) a man repeatedly attempts to kill his brother, only for the brother to return each time, until both die simultaneously, sharing the same epitaph and gravestone. In *Les 32*, thirty-two women's corpses are discovered in the cellar of a vampire. In *La Révolte du boucher* (*The Butcher's Revolt*), a madman is troubled by a slab of beef that falls out of a butcher's van, which later becomes the carved up body of a woman who has cuckolded him.

In thinking about Artaud's temporalities, the ghostly, characterised by continual return of troubling elements that refuse to go away, plays a vital role. The scenarios draw attention to time and its distortion in the form of ticking clocks and hanging watches. *Les Dix-huit secondes* opens with a man looking at his watch, *Vols* (*Flights*) opens with a calendar, *Les 32* is punctuated by images of a clock pendulum and *La Révolte du boucher* (*The Butcher's Revolt*) opens with a man anxiously pacing about, waiting, with the declaration "il est deux heures du matin" ("it is two A.M." Artaud 1978, 55). The effect of seeing a clock on film, outside its diegetic function of marking time passing more conventionally, also works against narrative, reminding the viewer of the time of watching a film and the construction of the time of the film world. *Les Dix-huit secondes* addresses this directly, as time is slowed down:

Gros plan de la montre marquant les secondes. Les secondes passent avec une lenteur infinie sur l'écran. À la dix-huitième seconde, le drame sera terminé. Le temps qui va se dérouler sur l'écran

est un temps intérieur à l'homme qui pense. Ce n'est pas le temps normal (Close shot of the watch indicating the seconds. The seconds pass infinitely slowly on the screen. At the eighteenth second the film will be over. The time that will pass by on the screen is interior to the mind of the man. It is not normal time, Artaud 1978, 9).

The time the film requires, according to Artaud, is vague (“une heure ou deux” – “one or two hours”, Ibid, 9). This time is filled with a series of images, culminating in the young man's suicide, as if he were seeing his entire life condensed into the moments before his death. Yet this is his life to come; a future condensed that is strangely prophetic for Artaud himself, with references to the Kabbalah (influential on his later writing), to madness, incarceration and to the afflictions that would trouble Artaud for the rest of his life (he has everything except “la possession de son esprit” – “the possession of his mind”, Ibid, 12). These one or two hours, expanded from the “normal time” of eighteen seconds, are condensed onto four pages in the scenario. Considering that the film was never made, it is perhaps also relevant to consider the time it might take to read, which is significantly less than one or two hours.

There are a series of different time frames going on here; Artaud's resistance to “normal time” is not so much a resistance to objective or quantifiable time as it exists outside the cinema, but rather the “dix-huit secondes réelles” (“eighteen real seconds”) counted by the watch in the film. These eighteen real seconds are of course anything but real, existing only as a fictional element of the film. This is not the time experienced by the protagonist, nor that experienced by the viewer, nor even the time it takes to read the scenario; and more crucially they do not constitute the time of the film world, if we understand this to be the world that the viewer enters, for this would be the interior time of thought as experienced by the protagonist. Cinema offers its viewer the possibility to experience time differently, to enter into the interior world of the unnamed man as his thoughts flash before him, and cinematic time as Artaud seems to conceive it is closer to this thinking time than it is to anything “normal.” By normal, in the context of Artaud's writing, we might better understand “normative;” conventional chronologies which present themselves under the guise of normality, but to which Artaud's protagonists have no real access. The “normal” might also refer to the conventions of narrative fiction, which are disturbed not least by the merging of Artaud's own preoccupations with his protagonist. In fact, the protagonist is as much a viewer, subjected to a series of images that reveal his “sa destinée misérable” (his “miserable fate”, Ibid, 9), and over which he has no control. There are no directions or notes as to how images are to be presented; unlike with *La Coquille La Coquille et le Clergyman* there are no fades, dissolves, or indications as to how the film should end. The only guidelines are a single close-up of the watch at the beginning and the instructions to make images tremble towards the end of the scenario.

What Artaud's scenarios seem to explore is the flexible temporality of the image and, paradoxically, considering that they are texts, how this overcomes the difficulty of expressing his thoughts adequately in written language. In *Les Dix-huit secondes*, the loss of words gives way to “un surcroît d'images contradictoires et sans grand rapport les unes avec les autres” (“a procession of images, masses of contradictory, disconnected images”, Ibid, 10). In *Deux Nations sur les confins de la Mongolie*, two countries fight “pour des mots” (“over words”), as the scenario declares: “dans le moindre des muscles de ma face, je peux vous créer des mondes d'images, instantanés” (“with the tiniest muscle of my face I can create worlds of instantaneous images”, Ibid, 17). Here we see how time expands and contracts through gesture, highlighting the corporeality of the image

and its potential to disrupt conventional understandings of the human body. Depictions of the body highlight its penetrability and possibilities for expansion in the cinema; the body is always in movement, either fragmented, as with the recurrent carving up of women's bodies, or frenzied, with nearly all of the scenarios involving a chase. Artaud drew inspiration from comedy, citing early Malec and "les Charlot les moins humains" ("the most inhuman of the Chaplin films", Ibid, 20). The temporality of early comedy and slapstick reflect Artaud's own interests, in their reliance on sudden unexpected events, the fall and chases that never seem to lead anywhere, "les convulsions et les sursauts d'une réalité qui semble se détruire elle-même" ("convulsions and jerks of a reality which seems to destroy itself", Ibid, 20). Many of his scenarios are insistently marked by interruption, full of temporal indicators such as "tout à coup", "à cet instant", "toute de suite" ("suddenly", "at that moment", "straight away" Artaud 1978: 12, 12, 22, 23, 24, 26, and many more).

La Révolte du boucher includes a preamble explaining both what *La Coquille et le clergyman* was attempting to do, and how *La Révolte du boucher* advances these ideas. Artaud states his aim to "introduire dans la pensée une rupture logique" ("introduce a logical rupture into thought", Ibid, 54). He writes that *La Révolte du boucher* makes explicit what *La Coquille et le clergyman* sought to implicitly suggest: "érotisme, cruauté, goût de sang, recherche de la violence, obsession de l'horrible, dissolution des valeurs morales, hypocrasie sociale, mensonges, faux témoignage, sadisme, perversité, etc., etc.," ("eroticism, cruelty, thirst for blood, violence, obsession with horror, dissolution of moral values, social hypocrisy, lies, false witnesses, sadism, perversity, etc., etc.", Ibid, 54). What is perhaps striking about this is the inclusion of the term cruelty, several years before it would become a central idea in his theatrical manifestos. Whilst the juxtaposition of terms in the list suggests, in contrast to what he would later write, that cruelty *was* to some extent about explicit violence — and Artaud's interest in blood, flesh, corporeal transformation and destruction never rules this out — there is also a sense in which cruelty is more fundamentally about rupture encapsulated in this moment of interruption that arrives when the audience is least expecting it.

If cruelty surfaces in rupture and interruption, I want to suggest that the time of cruelty might emerge through the interruption of futures or pasts into the present moment. Cruelty's real violence resides in its disruption of chronology, logical sequence and teleology. Its reliance on temporal anomalies, moments which lack harmony with the present, can be described in terms of anachronism. In *Spectres de Marx*, Derrida writes about anachronism, "cette intempestivité ou cette anachronie radicale" ("this radical untimeliness or anachrony"), as the basis for an attempt to "*penser le fantôme*" ("*think the ghost*" Derrida 1993, 52). The association of ghosting or haunting with anachronism enables a different approach to Artaud's ghostly figures, and Artaud's own ghosting in the texts that cannot quite be attributed to him. Derrida's text is structured around the repetition of the words of Hamlet's ghost: "the time is out of joint." (Hamlet, Act 1, scene v, quoted in Derrida 1994, 19, and repeated throughout). In these words, Derrida suggests, "le temps est *désarticulé*, *démis*, *déboîté*, *disloqué*, le temps est *détraqué*, *traqué* et *détraqué*, *dérangé*, à la fois *dérégulé* et *fou*. Le temps est *hors de ses gonds*, le temps est *déporté*, *hors de lui-même*, *désajusté*" ("time is *disarticulated*, *dislocated*, *dislodged*, time is run down, on the run and run down, *deranged*, both out of order and mad. Time is off its hinges, time is off course" Ibid, 42). This reads like the movements of one of Artaud's characters; the mad men of *Les Dix-huit secondes* or *La Révolte du boucher*; the consul desperately seeking to avoid conflict in *Deux Nations sur les confins de la Mongolie*; the clergyman's chase in *La Coquille et le Clergyman*. None of Artaud's characters, with the exception of the two brothers in *Le Maître de Ballantrae*, which is an adaptation, are given names.

Perhaps one way of interpreting Artaud's resistance to psychology, to characters, narrative closure and to rational explanation is by approaching time itself as a protagonist in his film scenarios. It is a reverse movement of time that is enabled in cinematic expression, as Artaud writes: "Le cinéma exige la rapidité, mais surtout la répétition, l'insistance, le revenez-y" ("The cinema requires speed, but above all repetition, insistence, the come-back-here" Artaud 1978, 64). There is perhaps nothing more insistent and repetitive than the spectre that keeps coming back. Significantly for Derrida, the spectre returns not only from the past but inhabits the present with the spirit of the "l'à-venir" ("future-to-come" Derrida 1993, 16). Derrida is writing about ethical responsibility towards others across time, an ethics that is only possible because of "la non-contemporanéité du temps présent à lui-même" ("non-contemporaneity of present time with itself" Ibid, 52). If cruelty is to have a politics, it would reside precisely in its radical untimeliness, in its capacity to violently interrupt the present and to disrupt all sense of falsely constructed chronological sequence on which coherent cinematic representation relies.

In "Cinéma et réalité", the preamble to *La Coquille et le clergyman*, Artaud writes about how cinematic images "créent des mondes qui ne demandent rien à personne ni à rien" ("create worlds which ask nothing from anyone or anything" Artaud 1978, 20). Cinema does not mimic a thought process, but rather thinks itself, beyond the confines of the human brain, and most significantly "il ne se sépare pas de la vie mais il retrouve comme la disposition primitive des choses" ("it does not separate itself from life but returns to the primitive order of things", Ibid, 20). Where cinema constitutes a return, it does not reach forward into the future but taps into a long-forgotten and mystical past. It enacts "un langage inorganique qui émeut l'esprit par l'osmose" ("an inorganic language which moves the mind by osmosis", Ibid, 20). Artaud's insistence on cinema's ability to communicate directly with no need for translation or interpretation is a fantasy of unmediated mediation, whereby images are projected directly onto the grey matter of the brain, recalling Deleuze's assertion "le cerveau, c'est l'écran" (Bergala et al 1986, 26). Derrida writes that the television of the future "se passera du support 'écranique' et projettera ses images directement dans l'oeil" ("will have no 'screenic' support and will project its images directly on the eye", Derrida 1993, 163). Notably, Deleuze also writes that the eye is the screen (Deleuze 2003, 78). Artaud is not so much interested in foretelling future technologies than tapping into the "part imprévu et de mystère" ("unexpected and mysterious side") of cinema, its ability to express "une vertu propre au mouvement secret et à la matière des images" ("a virtue belonging to the secret movement and matter of images", Artaud 1978, 65). He does, however, suggest that this can be materially perfected, writing that "on aura un jour prochain probablement le cinéma en relief, voire le cinéma en couleurs" ("one day we shall probably have a cinema in three dimensions and even in colour", Ibid, 65), but he views these technological advances as "moyens accessoires" ("accessory devices", Ibid, 65) rather than advances; in other words, he once again disrupts the chronology of cinematic history by suggesting that it is in the past, rather than the future, that cinema's "occult life" can be accessed.

Yet at the same time, in *Réponse à une enquête (Reply to an Inquiry)*, Artaud insists that the "films fantasmagoriques [...] poétiques [...] psychiques" ("phantasmagorical", "poetic", "psychic" films) are yet to be made (Artaud's emphasis, Ibid, 63), that the truly cinematographic quality of films "est à chercher" ("is still to be found", Artaud's emphasis, Ibid, 63). In *Sorcellerie et cinéma (Sorcery and Cinema)*, he writes that the direct communication that cinema enables when it moves beyond the power of representation resides in the "puissance virtuelle des images" ("the virtual power of the images", Ibid, 66). In other words, the power to evoke

other potential worlds that are both absent and present, suggested but never fully realised. This might again be thought of as ghosting, revealing a complex interaction of different temporalities, where hidden or occult lives are made manifest. Yet another time is revealed in *La Vieillesse précoce du cinéma* (*The Precocious Old Age of the Cinema*), where Artaud laments the cinema's failure to show us what might have been. He discusses the way that cinema behaves when it comes into contact with reality, arguing that it imposes an order on the world by leaving other aspects out. He writes:

L'objectif qui fonce au centre des objets se crée son monde et il se peut que le cinéma se mette à la place de l'oeil humain, qu'il pense pour lui, qu'il lui crible le monde, et que, par ce travail d'élimination concertée et mécanique, il ne laisse subsister que le meilleur. Le meilleur, c'est-à-dire ce qui vaut la peine qu'on le retienne, ces lambeaux d'aspects, qui flottent à la surface de la mémoire et dont il semble qu'automatiquement l'objectif filtre le résidu. (The lens that delves into the heart of objects creates its own world and the cinema may put itself in the position of the human eye, think for it, sift the world for it, and, by this concerted and mechanical task of elimination, let nothing but the best subsist. The best, that is to say what is worth retaining, those shreds of things which float on the surface of memory while the lens seems to filter out their residue automatically, Ibid, 82)

This cinema does not delve deep enough into experience, it ignores "ce qui se dissimule sous les choses, ou les images écrasées, piétinées, détendues ou épaisses de ce qui grouille dans les bas-fonds de l'esprit" ("that which hides beneath things, or the crushed, trampled, slack or tense images of that which crawls around the depths of the mind", Ibid, 82). Cinema's ultimate failure is in its process of selection, its failure to present the hidden, virtual aspects of every object. In fact, one could argue that this reflects all of Artaud's work, which can only necessarily present a fragment of what could have been, "des tronçons d'objets, des découpures d'aspects, des puzzles inachevés de choses" ("pieces of objects, cuttings of aspects, unfinished puzzles of things", Ibid, 82).

This text is suggestive of another kind of cinema, one that would take these fragments and transform them into a series of possibilities. Artaud intimates a project haunted by the ghosts of other forms of poetry, as he writes "il y a eu de la poésie, certes, autour de l'objectif, mais avant le filirage par l'objectif, l'inscription sur la pellicule" ("poetry did exist around the lens, but before being sifted, being inscribed on the film", Ibid, 83). Poetry becomes what could have existed but didn't ("la poésie de ce qui pourrait être": 84). This seems to point towards a non-cinema,⁴ a virtual presence beside the actual cinema, one that would have a contaminative effect. This project is equally suggestive of an archaeological approach; recalling George Kubler's *The Shape of Time*, as quoted in the epitaph of Zielinsky's *Deep Time of the Media*: "each material remnant is like the reminder of the lost causes whose only record is the successful outcome among simultaneous sequences" (Kubler in Zielinsky, 2006: vii). Artaud's continued refusal to draw distinct boundaries between different media speaks particularly well to this form of archaeological approach, as does the way in which his writings seek to redefine what can be considered as a medium. André Bazin's notion of an impure cinema that exposes rather than conceals its literary or theatrical origins of course springs to mind, as does recent work by Lucía

⁴ William Brown's mobilisation of the term 'non-cinema', pointing towards that which is excluded from cinema, connects productively with this idea, albeit under slightly different terms. See Brown, (2016, 104).

Nagib in revisiting Bazin's interest in impurity (2016: 131-148). Janet Harbord's work on film archaeology, evoking what she terms an "ex-centric cinema", draws on the writing of Giorgio Agamben in order to describe "a cinema that is not visible until its negative form is cast as a set of objects, networks, practices and iterations" (Harbord, 2016: 1). Artaud never ceased to explore the underside or negative cast of the media he engaged with, not least with his continued emphasis on failure. Equally, media archaeology's approach to the temporality of media history (for example Elsaesser, 2014, 77) also points towards the importance of undoing the chronological, teleological accounts of the development of technologies, reminding us of the potentially productive associations between the antiquated and the futuristic, between what is normally considered anachronistic and the present tense, a current that runs throughout Artaud's film and theatre writings, with their reliance on the latest technologies (or even technologies that have yet to be invented, such as colour and 3D, see Artaud 1976, 65), in tandem with their constant references to ancient cultures. In terms of its temporality, for this non-cinema to be successful the real, truly cruel cinema must always be about to come ("à-venir" in Derridian terms); it must always be out-of-time, asynchronic, and anachronistic. Artaud's scenarios should thus not be read as a record of a single successful outcome, but rather as the failure of this outcome; as always necessarily incomplete, unrealised, delayed and haunted by what never was and remains yet to come.

Bibliography

- Artaud, Antonin. 1978. *Oeuvres Complètes* III. Paris: Éditions Gallimard. Translations adapted from (1972) *Collected Works: Volume Three*. Trans Alastair Hamilton. London: Calder & Boyars.
- 1976- 1994. *Œuvres complètes – Nouvelle édition revue et augmentée*. Paris: Éditions Gallimard.
- Barber, Stephen. 2008. *Terminal Curses: The Last Words of Antonin Artaud*. London: Solar.
- Barthes, Roland. 1994. *Œuvres complètes* II. Paris: Seuil.
- Bazin, André. 1975. *Le Cinéma de la cruauté*. Paris: Flammarion.
- Bergala, A., Bonitzer, P., Chevré, M., Narboni, J., Tesson, C., and Toubiana, S. 1986. "Le cerveau, c'est l'écran: Entretien avec Gilles Deleuze." *Cahiers du cinéma*, 380 : 24-32.
- Blanchot, Maurice. 1959. *Le Livre à venir*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Brown, William. 2016. "Non-cinema. Digital, Ethics, Multitude", *Film-Philosophy* 20 (1): 104-130.
- Deleuze, Gilles. 2003. *Pourparlers*. Paris: Éditions de Minuit.
- Derrida, Jacques. 1993. *Spectres de Marx: L'État de la dette, le travail du deuil et la nouvelle Internationale*. Paris: Galilée. Translations from 1993 edition *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, trans Peggy Kamuf. New York and London: Routledge.
- Derrida, Jacques. 1967. *L'Écriture et la différence*. Paris: Seuil.
- Elsaesser, Thomas. 2004. "The New Film History as Media Archaeology", *Cinémas*, 14 (2-3): 75-117.

- Grotowski, Jerzy. 1968. *Towards a Poor Theatre*, trans. M. Buszewicz and J. Barba. London: Methuen.
- Harbord, Janet. 2016. *Ex-centric Cinema: Giorgio Agamben and Film*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Innes, Christopher. 1993. *Avant Garde Theatre, 1892–1992*. London: Routledge.
- Marcus, Laura. 2007. *The Tenth Muse: Writing About Cinema in the Modernist Period*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Nagib, Lucía. 2016. “Non-cinema, or the Location of Politics in Film”, *Film-Philosophy* 20 (1):131-148.
- Sontag, Susan. 1983. “Approaching Artaud”. *Under the Sign of Saturn*, 13-72. London: Writers and Readers.
- Zielinski, Siegfried. 2006. *Deep Time of the Media: Toward an Archaeology of Hearing and Seeing by Technical Means*. Trans Gloria Custance. Cambridge and London: MIT Press.

Ros Murray is a Lecturer in French at King’s College London. Her book Antonin Artaud: The Scum of the Soul came out in 2014 with Palgrave Macmillan.
Email: ros.murray@kcl.ac.uk

